

*A Step-By-Step Guide for Enriching  
the Lives of Young People in  
Your Congregation and Community*



Faith in  
*the* Five

PLANNING GUIDE

*brought to you by:*

AMERICA'S PROMISE  
THE ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH®







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Bruce Davidson

Congregation of Promise: Macedonia Community Baptist  
Church, Caroline County, Virginia



# FORWARD

BY HARRIS WOFFORD



Sanchez, Kansas City Star

Faith communities have always played an important role in the social movements of our nation, inspiring people to act on behalf of “liberty and justice for all,” even when the odds for change seemed insurmountable.

Today, faith communities continue to play an integral role in another movement: a growing campaign to fulfill the promise of America for *all* the children and youth of this nation.

As Dr. Martin Luther King warned almost 40 years ago, we must “*remind America of the fierce urgency of now.*” Time will not wait for us to address the obstacles facing our nation’s youth. Dr. King reminded us that, “*now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God’s children.*”

Congregations of Promise serve as the key to opening these doors of opportunity. Made up of caring adults who are spending quality time with young people—looking them in the eye, believing in their potential, inspiring them to achieve—Congregations of Promise are drawing upon the tools and resources provided by America’s Promise to expand their own efforts to reach out to the young people in their community. They are committed to ensuring that all young people have the fundamental resources to succeed in life. They are committed to opening the doors of opportunity to all of God’s children.

*Harris Wofford has dedicated much of his life to meeting the challenge of citizen service. More than 40 years ago, as a Special Assistant to President John F. Kennedy, he played a major role in the civil rights movement, chairing the White House Sub-Cabinet group on Civil Rights. In 1961, Wofford continued to advance the nation’s service movement when he helped launch the Peace Corps.*

*As a member of the U.S. Senate, representing the state of Pennsylvania, Wofford was a key player in crafting the legislation that established numerous service programs. Most recently, Wofford served as the CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service, where he was an instrumental figure in organizing the Presidents’ Summit for America’s Future that launched America’s Promise in 1997.*

*Today, as the Chairman of America’s Promise, Wofford remains in the forefront of the nation’s service movement.*



## INTRODUCTION:

# THE POWER *of* FAITH



Bruce Davidson

In the 1830's, the French historian, Alexis De Tocqueville remarked on how religious he found the American people. By most measures, they are still quite religious today. In fact, there are currently more than 355,000 places of worship in the United States, and 91 percent of Americans say they believe in *a* God. The great diversity of American life is reflected in the diversity of its religious expression. Christians make up a majority of the American population, but Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and many other groups are increasingly represented.<sup>1</sup> And while every one of these faiths has varying traditions and beliefs, a deep rooted spirit of community, volunteering and helping others is part of each of their foundations.

People of faith are compassionate and action-oriented, reaching out to their communities, volunteering and helping those in need. Most of all, people of faith care about the well-being of young people. In fact, faith communities have long been central to the development of young people. Research shows that seven out of 10 American adults (71%) regularly attended church for a period of time during their childhood. Apparently these old habits die hard because a majority of those who attended houses of worship as a child still attend regularly today (61%).<sup>2</sup>

The benefits a young person can derive from faith communities are infinite. As young people mature and ask questions about life's meaning, faith communities can help answer many difficult questions and provide the necessary structure and strength for confronting the storms of life. And in these extraordinary times, when we are facing such unexpected challenges, faith communities can provide support to both parents and children.

America's Promise is partnering with faith communities to help build a vast network of Congregations of Promise. These churches, synagogues, mosques and other houses of worship will bring faith communities together, focusing their energy and resources to fulfill Five Promises for their own children as well as those in their neighborhood.

Every child needs a caring adult role model in his or her life; a safe place to learn and grow; a healthy start; an opportunity to learn marketable skills through education; and opportunities to give back through community service. Not only are these the fundamental resources that create opportunities for success, they are the Five Promises that America's Promise strives to fulfill for every child.

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<sup>1</sup>*The Gallup Organization, 2001*

<sup>2</sup>*Barna Research Group, Ltd., 2001*



# ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Faith communities are, by nature, a powerful resource. But their involvement with other partners in a local America's Promise effort will dramatically increase their outreach within their community. This guide is designed to aid a congregation—of *any* and *all* faiths—helping to mobilize their community as they address the needs of their children and youth. In this guide you will learn:

- The philosophy of America's Promise;
- The workings of a Congregation of Promise;
- The benefits of becoming a Congregation of Promise or Congregational Partner;
- How to create Congregations of Promise within a Community of Promise.

In addition, there are discussion guides that will help your congregation make decisions about how to get your Promise effort off the ground and the steps needed to maximize your efforts.

Though certain guidelines and responsibilities are required to receive designation as a Congregation of Promise, each individual faith community has great latitude in customizing their approach to securing the Five Promises for their children and youth and the community at large.



Bruce Davidson

Caroline County, Virginia



PART I

# UNDERSTANDING AMERICA'S PROMISE





PART I

# UNDERSTANDING AMERICA'S PROMISE



## Our Mission

The mission of America's Promise is to mobilize people from every sector of American life to build the character and competence of our nation's youth by fulfilling Five Promises:

1. Ongoing relationships with caring adults—parents, mentors, tutors, or coaches;
2. Safe places with structured activities during non-school hours;
3. Healthy start and future;
4. Marketable skills through effective education;
5. Opportunities to give back through community service.

## Our Founding

America's Promise was founded in 1997 as a result of the Presidents' Summit for America's Future, chaired by General Colin L. Powell, USA (Ret.), where Presidents Clinton, Bush, Carter and Ford—and Nancy Reagan representing Ronald Reagan—challenged the nation to make children and youth a national priority and fulfill the Five Promises. The unprecedented gathering—sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Points of Light Foundation and United Way of America—brought together governors, mayors, community delegations, business and faith leaders and several thousand concerned citizens to make a commitment to ensure a brighter future for America's youth. That commitment was reaffirmed in 2001 by President George W. Bush when he declared, *"There is no more important goal for America than to make sure every person realizes the promise of our great land. And I want to thank the good folks of America's Promise for working tirelessly to make sure that goal reaches throughout all our country."*

## A Collaborative Network

America's Promise is a network that asks every community, organization and individual in the nation to help fulfill Five Promises for every young person. Using public and private funds, America's Promise supports and strengthens local efforts that are helping kids through collaboration. This collaboration leverages the work of local service organizations to reach more youth in communities fulfilling the Five Promises. Over the last five years, the America's Promise Alliance has grown close to 500 national partners including corporations, foundations, youth-serving organizations, and federal and state agencies, along with almost 500 community collaborations—which are called Communities of Promise.

The 5 Promises:

1. *Caring adults*
2. *Safe places*
3. *Healthy start*
4. *Marketable skills*
5. *Opportunities to serve*

AMERICA'S PROMISE  
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# The FIVE PROMISES

## Why the Five Promises Matter

Research conducted by the Search Institute—an independent, nonprofit, nonsectarian organization whose mission is to advance the well-being of adolescents and children by generating knowledge and promoting its application—tells us that the Five Promises are critical principles for ensuring positive youth development. The Five Promises are cumulative—the more the Five Promises are present in the lives of children and youth on a regular basis, the more they thrive, succeeding in areas such as school, helping others, maintaining good health and overcoming adversity. Conversely, the Five Promises have been proven to reduce high-risk behavior patterns such as illicit drugs, sexual activity, violence, alcohol, tobacco, depression and suicide.<sup>3</sup>

Twenty-five years of research demonstrates that access to this combination of support, experience and opportunity is what matters most to the well-being of every child. Young people need ongoing support for each promise through the first two decades of life. All Five Promises gain power when they are experienced multiple times in multiple settings.<sup>4</sup>

## Words of Wisdom

*“What I really love is the Five Promises — how you can fulfill them in your community. The church is the perfect place.”*

— Clemmie Perry, Martin Memorial  
A.M.E. Church’s Congregation of Promise  
Miami, FL

<sup>3</sup> Search Institute Study of 6–12th grade public school students during the 1999-2000 school year. Sample includes students in 318 towns and cities in 33 states.

<sup>4</sup> Five Promises Research Booklet, 2002, Search Institute



PROMISE ONE:

## CARING ADULTS



Bruce Davidson

Responsible adults are the single greatest resource available to our young people. For many children, positive long-term contact with an adult will provide the intellectual nourishment, support, care, guidance and advocacy they need to mature, discover and learn. In fact, 65 percent of seven to 14 year-olds would like to connect with an adult they can trust and who respects them.<sup>5</sup>

While parents should be the first caring adults in a child's life, they are often overwhelmed by obstacles that make it difficult to be there for their children. Single parenting, poverty, lack of education and a lack of skills can all be barriers to effective parenting. And even when kids have attentive, loving parents, they still need and benefit from other caring adults in their lives.

Caring and connectedness within and beyond the family are consistently found to be powerful factors in protecting young people from negative behaviors and in encouraging good social skills, responsible values and positive identity. In fact, Search Institute's research indicates that young people should have between six and seven caring adults in their lives who know when their birthday is. While all relationships are important, many youth do not experience this web of adult support and care beyond their families.

*A Congregation of Promise can connect young people with faith leaders, neighbors, parishioners, coaches, and teachers—all caring adults, who can serve as potential mentors and positive role models.*

**Promise in Action:** The National Jewish Coalition for Literacy (NJCL) is an America's Promise partner which encourages Jewish Americans to become tutors and reading partners for youth. The NJCL has more than 5,000 tutors and 35 local affiliates from 50 Jewish communities across the nation.

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<sup>5</sup>(Saito, R.N. et al., 1995)



## PROMISE TWO:

# SAFE PLACES



Bruce Davidson

In America today, almost seven million school-age children are home alone after school.<sup>6</sup> And studies show that children get into the most trouble during the time period between the end of school and the return of parents or caregivers from work.<sup>7</sup>

Young people need structure, and they need to be physically and emotionally safe. Safe places include safe homes, safe neighborhoods, and particularly safe places with structured activities during non-school hours. Providing safe places and structured activities has many benefits both to young people and society. Safe places can:

- Connect youth to principled and caring adults
- Nurture young people's skills and capacities, including social skills, vocational interests, and civic responsibility
- Protect youth from violence and other dangerous or negative influences
- Create peer groups that exert positive influence on each other
- Provide opportunities for children and youth to contribute to their community
- Enrich young people's academic performance and educational commitment

In fact, research indicates that children who attend high quality programs have better peer relations, emotional adjustment, conflict resolution skills, grades, and conduct in school compared to their peers who are not in after school programs.<sup>8</sup> That is why America's Promise is working with Congregations of Promise to increase the number of safe places and structured activities available during non-school hours. Engaging in safe, interesting, and enriching activities during non-school hours builds confidence, discipline and social skills. It can also help protect young people from violence and keep them out of trouble.

**Bright Ideas:** In South Hampton Roads, VA, congregation members, volunteers and partner organizations have transformed Brighton Rock A.M.E. Church into a safe place for children—especially the children who wait for the bus across the street from the church. Each morning, the “Bus Stop Bible Study” provides an opportunity for teens to sit with Rev. Clifford Barnett and discuss school, summer jobs, and plans for the future.

<sup>6</sup>*Children's Defense Fund-State of America's Children 2001*

<sup>7</sup>*Snyder, et al., 1999*

<sup>8</sup>*Baker and Witt, 1996; Nagaoka and Brown, 1999; Posner and Vandell, 1999*



## PROMISE THREE:

# A HEALTHY START



Mary Ellen Mark

To many, a healthy start focuses on what children need before they start school—prenatal care, immunizations, and school readiness. Indeed, these early years are crucial, but we must also think about this promise more broadly—such as a healthy start for adulthood. This shift in thinking highlights the urgency of providing the following types of services and opportunities during the entire birth-to-20 age span:

- Economic security
- Reliable and affordable health care
- Quality health education
- Adequate nutrition and exercise
- Safety at home, in schools, and in neighborhoods
- Mental health support systems for adolescents, parents and their children
- Accessible and affordable prenatal care

Too few young people have comprehensive access to this series of supports in their communities. We need to provide all of them for a healthy start.

America's Promise is finding new ways—in cooperation with the government, health care providers and businesses—to ensure that all youth have adequate nutrition and access to affordable healthcare, including immunizations, regular check ups, eye and ear exams and treatment of illness. A Congregation of Promise for example, can hold a health fair with materials that are appropriate for children and youth, incorporating various speakers such as a nutritionist who can give advice on healthy eating habits.

**Promise in Action:** Hope Christian Church in West Fayetteville, NC, has created a lunch program for young people in their Child Development Center as part of their commitment to America's Promise.



## PROMISE FOUR:

# MARKETABLE SKILLS



Mary Ellen Mark

Employers need workers who can think effectively, learn new skills and solve problems creatively. Yet today, too few young people have these qualities or in many cases, even basic work skills. America's Promise is working to enhance competitive work skills education, in order to help all young people recognize the link between education and work. We are forging new partnerships among businesses, schools and citizen volunteers to increase the number of internships, job shadowing and other job training opportunities.

A Congregation of Promise can ensure that children have the drive, skills and competencies to be successful and productive workers. This includes not only the basics—reading, math, language, science and technology—but also personal attitudes and qualities such as responsibility, self-motivation, management and integrity.

**Promise in Action:** The SPOTLITE Program of an AME Congregation of Promise in Lenoir, NC, provides college preparation for African American youth, and social interaction skill building. In addition, the curriculum includes computer skills training and physical activities.



## PROMISE FIVE:

# OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE



Mary Ellen Mark

It's time to see young people as part of the solution, not as the problem. Even though youth are more likely to volunteer than adults, fewer than half of all youth consistently serve others. As a result, they miss this powerful opportunity for growth. Giving children and adolescents opportunities to serve acknowledges their worth, creates a sense of community and helps shape America's future. Though school-based community service has received the most attention, there are many different avenues through which young people can contribute to their community. These include:

- Religious congregations
- Neighborhood teams
- Service clubs
- Family volunteering
- Youth organizations
- Schools

Promoting service as a lifelong value is enhanced when youth participate at many ages, through multiple avenues, and when opportunity is given to reflect on the act of service. Essentially, the term "service-learning" encapsulates this. An emerging body of research suggests that service-learning experiences enhance self-esteem, a sense of personal competence and efficacy, engagement with school, and social responsibility for others. With appropriate training and support, there are hundreds of different types of service young people can perform in their communities. America's Promise is providing young people with the opportunity to serve by among other things, increasing company sponsored youth volunteer opportunities and supporting existing service learning programs. A Congregation of Promise can promote volunteerism with youth in many unique ways. For example, if a congregation runs a soup kitchen, inviting youth to staff it for a day would be a natural entry for them to get involved with serving others.

**Promise in Action:** In Lakewood, WA, Congregation of Promise St. Francis Cabrini Catholic Church of Promise teamed up with Mann Middle School to provide meals and activities for a retreat. In addition, Christ Lutheran Church of Promise partnered with two local elementary schools to create a tutoring program.



# HOW COMMUNITIES CAN RESPOND TO THE CALL

In every community—large and small, rural and urban—assets and resources exist to help address the needs of the young people. Communities of Promise simply ensure that all Five Promises are being fulfilled for as many children and youth as possible through a robust collaborative of stakeholders in the community. The truth is each sector in the community—faith, government, education, youth-serving agencies and other nonprofit, healthcare and business organizations—all play a part in determining how a young person develops in *their* community. Communities of Promise seek to connect the resources of each of these partners to help facilitate unprecedented collaboration and serve young people with far greater resources than they would otherwise receive if they remained separate, disconnected entities.

The central belief of a Community of Promise is that the development of character and competence in a child's life is dependent on the *cumulative power of all Five Promises* being fulfilled. The diagram below illustrates the potential power of a Community of Promise.



Sites where kids are known by name: e.g., schools, congregations, after-school programs, clubs, foster care/group homes, and public housing

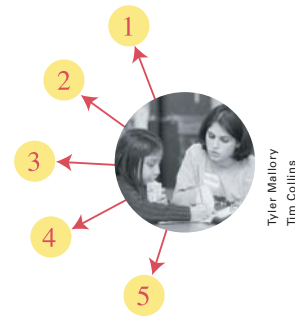
Youth serving organizations/programs: e.g., Big Brothers Big Sisters, Camp Fire, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Community Health Centers, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Junior Achievement, and Head Start

Champions and resource providers: e.g. banks, restaurants, drug stores, volunteer centers, hospitals, local businesses, local branches of national corporations, media, colleges and universities, churches/synagogues/mosques and elected officials

America's Promise Tools: Five Promises Checklist, Promise Station and Power of Five (See pages 46 and 47 for a more detailed explanation of these tools)

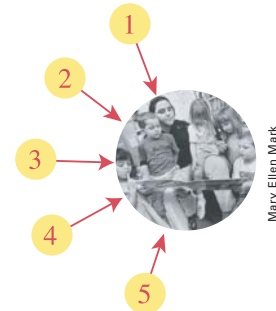


There are two key approaches to fulfilling the work of the Community of Promise. The first is the case management approach. The case management approach is based on a close caring adult/child relationship. To fulfill the Five Promises, the caring adult identifies the needs of the child and helps him/her access the Five Promises by being the bridge to the community resource providers. The Community of Promise, through its collaborative efforts, creates a “road map”—the Five Promises Checklist—which helps caring adults shepherd the child through the community’s service providers.



**Bright Idea:** Houston’s Promise in Houston, TX is using an adaptation of the Five Promises Checklist as a vital resource for volunteers from the faith community who are mentoring at-risk youth. Three hundred volunteers from 30 congregations, serving 900 young people, are participating in this faith-based mentoring program that serves as a gateway to providing all Five Promises. Three agencies leading this program are Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston, Communities in Schools Houston and Volunteer Houston.

The second key approach is the site management approach or site-based delivery. This is the process of providing the Five Promises at sites, like a school, church, temple, mosque or recreation center, where young people are present. In this case, the Community of Promise pairs sites where children and youth live, work, play and worship with service-providing programs. Programs delivering specific services operate at the sites where youth are present.



**Bright Idea:** In Kansas City, MO, Second Missionary Baptist Church/Touch of Grace Ministries offers many different programs for the youth in their community, including “Bold Christians in the Marketplace.” This unique program offers young people exposure to the business arena, helping them develop marketable skills through a mentoring relationship. In the second phase of the program, youth establish their very own business and go from simply learning about the corporate world to taking part in it.



## HOW CONGREGATIONS OF PROMISE CAN GET INVOLVED

There are two ways that communities of faith can get involved with a Community of Promise. The first is by becoming a Congregation of Promise. A **Congregation of Promise** is a local, faith-based affiliate of a Community of Promise that makes a commitment to fulfill all Five Promises for a specific number of children and young people within the congregation's membership and/or the wider-community.

The second option for becoming involved in local Promise work is to become a **Congregational Partner**. These are congregations that may not be ready to commit to fulfilling all Five Promises for the young people of their community. Instead, they can choose to get involved with their Community of Promise by engaging in one or more roles outlined in the community change model. Congregational partners may provide physical space, financial support, volunteers, programs, leadership, or other resources as a partner to the community-wide effort.

**Bright Ideas:** In Wheeling, WV, Bethlehem Apostolic Temple congregation members have teamed up with Ohio County's Promise, the local Promise effort, to volunteer at a children's after-school program. In addition, Ohio County's Promise has converted part of Wheeling Methodist Church into a children's tutoring program center that is open every school day.

### Words of Wisdom

*"Kids need to know that there are caring adults and open doors...folks that live right here in this community who care."*

—Rev. Clifford Barnett, Brighton Rock AME Zion Church in South Hampton Roads, VA.



Bruce Davidson

Caroline County, Virginia

PART II

# CREATING A CONGREGATION *of* PROMISE





PART II

# CREATING A CONGREGATION *of* PROMISE

The community and the congregation both benefit from the work of Congregations of Promise. Some reasons to join the movement include:

- **To increase and deepen your congregation's positive impact on the young people of the community.**

Children play, learn and worship together in a neighborhood. By engaging in your local Promise effort, your congregation will be fulfilling an important role of bridging the divide between those with access to resources and those who need access to resources.

- **To increase the resources for youth within your own congregation.**

As a Congregation of Promise, you have the opportunity to identify the needs of the young people in your own congregation and surrounding area. Once determined, you can partner with others in the Community of Promise network to fulfill those needs for your congregants.

- **To raise the profile of your congregation both locally and nationally.**

The networks that your Community of Promise and America's Promise have developed can provide an opportunity to share and highlight the assets of your congregation. Becoming a Congregation of Promise is also a strategy to reach into the community and grow your membership.

- **Because the Five Promises are an effective, unique framework for approaching the needs of youth.**

While youth work is often an important part of congregational ministry, working within the Five Promises framework provides a context that is comprehensive, community-based and proven effective.

- **To develop and deepen relationships with other congregations and faith traditions, as well as other groups in your community.**

By becoming part of the work of your Community of Promise, your congregation will gain a better understanding of and connection to other congregations in and outside of your faith tradition. Your congregation will also gain similar insights and connections with groups from other sectors of your community, including the nonprofit, public and business sectors.



**Bright Ideas:** In Las Vegas, NV, Las Vegas' Promise is putting together diverse cross-sectional teams comprised of churches, synagogues, schools, banks and divisions of the city administration to reach into the lives of children using the Five Promises. Programs in the faith effort are varied, and include mentoring and after-school tutoring through marketable skills training in church-based computer labs.

### Words of Wisdom

*"Once we were designated a Promise program, the schools recognized us as something of value."*

—Reverend Kathy Snedeker, First United Methodist Church,  
Saginaw, MI.



# GETTING YOUR CONGREGATION OF PROMISE STARTED

Now that you have learned about the America's Promise philosophy, community change model, and what a Congregation of Promise is, you are ready to get started in creating your Congregation of Promise. Don't worry; you are not starting off from scratch. Congregations are already perfectly poised to partner with a Community of Promise to fulfill the Five Promises for youth because they bring ready-made assets to the table:

## **Physical Assets:**

- Congregational buildings—natural locations for caring adults and safe places.
- A local membership base—many of whom may be willing partners in this initiative. The people of a congregation are perhaps the greatest asset of a congregation.

## **Social/Community Assets:**

- Purpose—beyond its physical location, congregational groups have the unique mission of faith, which usually calls them to act on their religious convictions. These underlying beliefs play a powerful role in motivating people to act for social justice on behalf of others, especially children.
- Leadership—community leadership often accompanies faith leaders' religious work. Their vocation often has a resonance of moral authority in a community.
- A growth strategy—congregations may already have plans to reach out to those in need in their neighborhood and the surrounding community, and these plans have a natural fit with the mission of America's Promise. In fact, many congregations are already doing the Five Promises in some form or another. America's Promise seeks to expand and support their efforts, not replace them. By using the Five Promises as a challenge and measuring guide, America's Promise may bring additional assets to help congregations succeed in their growth strategy.

Send the completed form by e-mail to [faith@americaspromise.org](mailto:faith@americaspromise.org), by fax to (703) 535-3903 or by mail to Reverend Mark Farr, Director of Faith Initiatives at America's Promise, 909 North Washington Street, Suite 400, Alexandria, VA 22314. Once it is received, we will register you as a Congregation of Promise and connect you to your nearest Community of Promise.





## A Step by Step Process

Every congregation is unique, and once you get started creating your Congregation of Promise, much of what you do will be specific to your situation. However, these basic steps will help guide you along the way:

### **1 Make an initial agreement to get involved.**

Contact your local Community of Promise to express interest in becoming involved in their efforts. Together, you can begin to discuss ways that your congregation may be able to best serve the youth of your community. This is also an opportunity to network with other congregations that are already involved. Some Communities of Promise even have a faith team or faith liaison that can be helpful to you as you craft your commitment.

If you are unsure how to contact your local Community of Promise, simply call America's Promise at (800) 365-0153.

### **2 Educate your congregation about the Five Promises and the role they can play in helping your community's youth.**

Educate yourself and the congregation about the Five Promises. The Community of Promise and other Congregations of Promise can be helpful in this process. Some ideas on how to spread the message include:

- Passing out materials about America's Promise, your Community of Promise and the Five Promises
- Conducting an informational meeting after services
- Presenting the information to the social action committee
- Providing material as content for a sermon, homily or khutbah
- Making an announcement during service
- Utilizing congregational newsletters, Web sites or other communications vehicles

Many materials can be reproduced from this guide or found at [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org). By engaging in outreach, you will begin to find out which members are interested in actively participating in the Congregation of Promise.

### **3 Obtain the commitment of clergy and/or congregational leaders.**

Make an appointment with clergy and the appropriate leadership to obtain their commitment to the development of a Congregation of Promise. Always remember how important the clergy and congregational leaders are to delivering the Five Promises in your congregation. (Most congregations have a team, council, board, etc., that supports the main leaders. You may want to ask the clergy or congregation leader if you can meet with the leadership team to make the case for developing the Five Promises in the congregation.) These leaders will not always want to be involved, but you will need their blessing to move forward. It is crucial that you have their support. At this early stage, let them know how you want to make a difference in the lives of young people in the community, and that you would like the congregation to be



involved. Be sure to explain that this is not only meant to help the young people within the congregation, but also to connect with all youth in the neighborhood.

Remember to present the material on America's Promise in a manner that will help them understand that becoming a Congregation of Promise will not take away from the work the congregation is already doing with young people, but will instead improve and build on that work.

Indicate that you will not be asking the congregational leaders to do it alone, but that you would like to form a team to help achieve the objectives, which will be simple, clear, limited, collaborative and shared. Suggest that the clergy appoint someone, perhaps a trusted staff member, as his or her representative on your Promise Team. Keeping the congregational leaders in the loop will only increase your chances of achieving success and longevity for your future Congregation of Promise.

#### **4 Build a committed team**

Gaining wide-spread support for any long-term effort is critical to its sustainability; Promise work is no different. In most cases, it is more effective to work with a team than by yourself. Therefore, collaborate with other congregational members who also want to make a difference in the lives of young people in your community. This group will serve as the congregation's Promise Team.

#### **Here are some suggestions on assembling your Promise Team:**

- Create a diverse team of three to six people. Don't just choose the individuals you know well; request the presence of those who will be lively, creative and willing to commit time to this effort. Remember that everyone will have a unique talent to bring to the team, so choose a diverse group of people to ensure a wealth of ideas.
- Be sure to engage youth in the team. It is important to include at least one young person on the Promise Team who will give a youth perspective. Young people of all ages can work side by side with adults in creating and implementing solutions to community problems. Remember, every great movement has had young people at the forefront of change.
- Decide on a lead point of contact. It may be you or another member of the team such as the clergy's representative. The role of the lead point of contact is to convene meetings, facilitate discussion, be the liaison to the Community of Promise or Community of Promise Faith Team and ultimately serve as the coordinator for the day-to-day activities of the Promise effort.

#### **5 Convene an initial meeting to understand what your congregation is already doing within the Five Promises framework.**

Evaluate the needs and assets of your congregation and community in the context of the Five Promises. If you know what the needs are, you can more effectively fulfill those needs. So as a team, begin to think about how your congregation can create or improve its efforts on behalf of young people. Most congregations already have a variety of assets that will be valuable to any Promise effort. The most valuable asset in any congregation is its members, and their commitment to caring. In addition, many congregations have tangible assets that can contribute to the Promise effort such as a building, transportation, classrooms, equipment, supplies, etc.



In addition, think about the roles that the congregation and its members are currently playing. Do children come to the church? Are you serving children at the temple? Are you offering programs—reading, mentoring, literacy, computer, etc. at the mosque? Are you providing volunteers, speaking from the pulpit or bimah, donating money benefiting children and youth?

Think about the programs or activities provided by your congregation and identify which promises are being fulfilled by those activities or programs. And always look for how one activity can fulfill multiple promises?

For this first meeting, convene at the site of worship and discuss the materials provided by America's Promise. Be sure to set an agenda for this and all meetings. Below you will find a suggested agenda that will help you create the outline for the first meeting.

## Agenda

### *Our First Promise Meeting!*

- Open meeting and welcome
- Describe the Five Promises
- Ask each person to state:
  - Why they came
  - What each hopes to get out of the experience
- Using the chart on the following page, create a discussion: "What is our congregation currently doing for and/or with young people?"
- Explain different ways of using the Self-Assessment Tool
- Agree to either work on the Self Assessment Tool together or separately
- Select a point of contact to keep the clergy or leaders informed
- Set a date for the next meeting to discuss the results of the assessment



The chart below is a simple way for you to map out the promises already provided in your congregation's programming. Before you fill in the chart you may want to use the Self Assessment Tool on the following pages to identify the promises that you are already fulfilling. Be sure to customize the chart to fit your congregation and feel free to leave out material you do not think is relevant or helpful.

Program/Activity Community	Promise(s) fulfilled	Ages Served	Members or
Religious Education Class	Caring Adult, Safe Place	0-18	Members
Computer Skills Class	Marketable Skills	11-18	Members and community
Youth Group	Caring Adult, Safe Place, Opportunities to Serve	14-18	Members
Youth Sport Program	Healthy Start	5-18	Members
Day Care	Caring Adult, Safe Place	0-5	Community

This chart is intended as a thoughtful discussion starter. You can also download additional materials for discussion at [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org). Materials specific to faith initiatives can be downloaded at: <http://63.98.236.133/GetInvolved/NationalCommitments/faith/main.cfm>. Be sure to discuss the questions together or fill out the forms individually beforehand and then share your responses.

**Bright Ideas:** In Bowling Green, VA, Macedonia Baptist Church of Promise offers a safe haven for elementary and middle school students to turn to for after school tutoring (safe place with caring adults). Church members also volunteer to provide underserved youth a hearty meal at the end of the day (healthy start).



## ASSESSMENT TOOLS

# FOR CONGREGATIONS OF PROMISE

## The Self-Assessment Guide

This tool is intended to help you discover unique ways in which you can expand and improve the work of your congregation among youth. It is not an exhaustive process or a strict set of rules you need to follow. Rather, the Self-Assessment Guide is customizable to better fit the needs of your congregation. You can ask the questions that we supply or tailor them to the individual needs of your congregation. Either way, the goal is to stimulate informed discussion and share knowledge about your congregation and your neighborhood. But always keep in mind that it is essential to answer each question as honestly as possible in order to give the group a more realistic picture of its challenge.

### Section I: Access Congregation Resources

These questions are generally grouped within the framework of the Five Promises to help you make an assessment based upon your strengths and weaknesses in each area. Once you have completed it, see if your group can more easily describe the unique assets and potential needs your congregation has for serving youth.

**Circle the response that you think is most true for your congregation.**

- 1 – Disagree/Don't know
- 2 – Somewhat agree
- 3 – Agree
- 4 – Strongly Agree

### Promise One: Caring Adults

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We have a variety of activities for children to help them learn and grow into healthy adults.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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We offer childcare in the building at most public events.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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We network and plan events with outside organizations, such as the YMCA, Boys & Girls' Clubs and others.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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Our congregation offers many opportunities for youth and adults to share similar environments and learning together.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

---

Members of our congregation have professional skills that might benefit youth.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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Young people are offered mentoring opportunities with adults in caring relationships.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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The congregational leadership teams broadly reflect the generational make-up of the congregation and neighborhood.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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## **Promise Two: Safe Places**

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Our building is well-lit, warm and a safe place.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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We provide structured events and activities for children and young people.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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Our building is open to congregants or other visitors during non-worship hours.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

---

Transportation to our site is easily accessible.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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### **Promise Three: A Healthy Start**

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We provide information on public health and social issues faced by children and young adults such as drug use, school bullying, domestic violence, mental health, etc.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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Our nursery is clean, full of age-appropriate toys and is well-staffed.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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Most of the members of our congregations have adequate health insurance for their families.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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Most of the members of our congregation have a regular physician, dentist and other health care providers as necessary.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
----------	----------	----------	----------

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## Promise Four: Marketable Skills

Children and young people are involved alongside adults in the programs run by the congregation, so that they can learn and grow from watching them.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

The information we provide for learning and activities is presented in language that children can understand and learn from.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

The congregation regularly requests and assesses the many diverse skills of congregation members in order to create opportunities for young people to learn.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Our congregation helps expose young people to different kinds of marketable skills.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

## Promise Five: Opportunities to Serve

We make an effort to provide young people with access to information about how to serve in their community.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Children and young people regularly help out in our services as ushers, readers, etc.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Our congregation runs a number of service activities involving youth such as Make a Difference Day, Martin Luther King Day, Groundhog Job Shadow Day, etc.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---





We have materials available relating to national and local organizations focusing on children, such as America's Promise, the Children's Defense Fund, etc.

**1**                      **2**                      **3**                      **4**

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Young people are encouraged to donate to the congregation or to a charitable organization with their own money in a fashion that is in accordance with their means.

**1**                      **2**                      **3**                      **4**

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## Discussion Guide

Below is the Discussion Guide, a tool that has been created to help you begin to think about how your congregation can best serve young people. It is intended to help you create discussions in groups around the ideas of youth and young people, and the important role they play in a congregation. Use the guide freely and flexibly, picking the questions that are most relevant to you, and discussing those that are appropriate to your situation.

### **Understanding your Congregation's culture with regard to youth**

1. In the building, where do you see children?
2. Where do you not see them?
3. How are children involved in serving others?
4. Are both adults and children regularly asked their opinions about how the church, temple, mosque or synagogue may be improved or can provide needed services?
5. Do the prayers include mention of children or their issues?



6. Does your congregation hold discussion nights or times when youth and adults can share ideas and learn together?
7. How would you describe the mission of your congregation as it relates to children and youth?
8. What would your congregation look like if it were more youth-friendly?
9. How interactive are the resources and materials you produce for the congregation?
10. How many different leaders, and of what ages, are heard in your services?
11. What percentage of the congregation's youth holds leadership roles in the congregation?
12. What are the needs of your congregation's children?

Once you have completed this activity, discuss whether or not your congregation's actions with youth match its philosophy about youth participation. If not, what can your group do as part of your Promise effort to change its culture?

### **Assets within your Congregation**

Answer each question, using as much information as you have. A simple estimate is fine.

1. How large is your congregation?
2. What is the purpose of your congregation?
3. How many services do you have?



4. How many of those services have facilities for children?
5. What facilities do you have for children at other times?
6. Does your congregation have any: after-school activities, youth groups, youth Bible, Koran, or scripture studies?
7. Does your congregation have any outside agencies running groups that benefit children and youth (Young Life clubs, National Jewish Coalition for Literacy, etc.)? If so, how can you involve them in your Promise efforts?
8. What percentage of the congregation takes on leadership roles?
9. What are the occupations/talents of your congregation's membership that may be helpful? Does your congregation have any: doctors/health professionals, teachers, computer experts, nonprofit leaders, etc.? If so, how can you involve them?

Once you have answered these questions, discuss ways your congregation can connect your assets to your congregation's children and your community.

## **Past Achievements**

Describe one or more of your congregation's recent achievements as they relate to young people.

1. What did you plan to achieve among and with young people?
2. What were the barriers to achieving those goals?
3. What assets did you already have to make a start on that goal?
4. What made it a success?
5. How did you measure the results of this success?

6. What new assets were created as a result of this achievement?

By understanding past successes, your group can have a blueprint for ensuring the future success of any new effort.

## **Looking Around and Assessing Your Neighborhood**

1. What major organizations and institutions exist in your neighborhood?
2. Make a list of all the groups in your neighborhood that are already working in some way with children and youth.
3. What excites you about partnering with others?
4. What do you find daunting about partnering with others?
5. What are the needs of your neighborhood's children and youth?
6. What connections do you have to other houses of worship?
7. What connections do you have to schools and other educational facilities?
8. What connections do you have to local businesses?
9. What connections do you have to elected representatives?

Please describe other connections you have to your neighborhood.

Once you have completed this survey, discuss what can be done to expand upon existing partnerships, or to create new ones.

PART III

# DEVELOPING A COMMITMENT





PART III

# DEVELOPING A COMMITMENT

## Creating a Commitment

America's Promise asks you to make a clear and specific commitment to the young people you are working with, and define a timeline by which you hope to make a significant difference in their lives. In developing your commitment, try to find a balance between a broad goal and ensuring that you have the action steps and mechanisms in place to track the achievement of your goals. Remember, your goals can always be adjusted as your program evolves.

To create a Congregation of Promise, the commitment you make must demonstrate how the program or activity will provide all Five Promises to a specific number of young people. This might be a new initiative or an expansion of your congregation's ongoing work with young people. Either way, start by referring to the information your team collected in your initial assessment. Then develop ideas about how you might fill in the gaps in the Five Promises for the young people you have identified as your target group. Think about some new activity or program ideas that can address the deficits that have become apparent through your assessment. Assign team members to go back and flesh out the ideas. Or see if the group can prioritize ideas. In developing your commitment, try to find a balance between a broad goal, and ensuring that you have the steps in place to achieve the goal. Remember as your Congregation of Promise develops, your goals can always be adjusted.

### 1. Specific and measurable goals

As you are setting your goal, consider the following components:

- **Determine the number and age of the specific children you will reach, including whether or not the children are from within the congregation; or from the community-at-large.**

Example: Fifteen children from the 7th grade class of Wilson Jr. High School who have been identified by the school as needing additional resources.

- **Describe the nature of the project, including how all Five Promises will be delivered.**

Example: Provide one hour of tutoring in the school each week, and use the Five Promises Checklist with the students during these tutoring sessions.

- **Describe how many adults or older youth will be involved.**

Example: Thirty adults from St. James' Church. Every child will be assigned two adults who will serve as tutors every other week.



- **Outline how long the commitment of each adult will be.**

Example: One hour every other week for the next year.

- **Determine which other partners from the community should be involved.**

Example: St. James' Church, Wilson Jr. High School, Community of Promise  
Checklist resource providers

As your ideas grow, you may want to involve other community groups, such as: the Boys & Girls Club, the local police department and the Police Athletic League, another congregation, the mayor's Task Force on Children and Youth, hospitals, supermarkets, etc. Many of these groups already have connections to America's Promise nationally, and your Community of Promise leader may help you contact them. Developing creative and realistic ideas will encourage leaders of these groups to get involved.

## **2. An agreement to measure those goals**

Your local Community of Promise may already have a specific process for measuring the outcomes of your goals. One simple way to measure results is to ask congregational volunteers to submit the date and some observations of their work with young people each week. Ask the school or teacher if they can supply benchmark information about each student's grades or performance at the beginning of the tutoring year, and again at the end of the year. Create a report at the end of the year that includes qualitative and quantitative results.

Quantitative Results: Thirty-five tutoring sessions; math grade improved from D to B.

Qualitative Results: In early sessions, a student is shy and reticent, but warms up as the year progresses. Her parents call the volunteers to thank them for helping to improve their daughter's grade.

A full report with both qualitative and quantitative results will help your congregation, the school and the Community of Promise make their case and ensure future success.

## **3. A timeline and detailed plan for reaching your goals**

Create a plan that will help you work more effectively and, most importantly, stay committed to reaching your goals. A clear plan will help keep you on schedule, and give you a sense of what you have achieved and what you still need to accomplish. Consider how long you might take to accomplish what you want to do. This could be months or years. Keep in mind that it is a good idea to set both short-term and long-term targets. An initial target might be one year from the original commitment, while a long-term target might be more like five years.

## **4. A lead point of contact and the involvement of a diverse community team**

(See "Getting Started" in Part II for details on how to form a team and determine a point of contact.)

Below is a sample commitment, and one-year plan along with worksheets to fill out your own commitment.

### **St. Paul's Congregation of Promise Commitment**

The Mission of the St. Paul AME Congregation of Promise is to reach at least 50 young people with all Five Promises each year for five years. That is a minimum of 250 children and young people assisted by our ministries in five years. We will ensure that half of them will be children from the neighborhood beyond our church. In particular, we want to offer at least half of those children a caring adult from our congregation, both inside the parish and in the school.

Our aim is to create a thriving parish community where our efforts are linked with those of other community members. To grow St. Paul's Congregation of Promise we will reach out to other community members including:

- The Boys & Girls Club
- The local police department and the Police Athletic League
- St. Philips Church
- The YMCA
- The mayor's Task Force on Children and Youth
- MLK Jr. School
- St. Paul Hospital
- Bank of America

We intend to involve at least 10 percent of our church members in our activities, and we will report our progress each year at the annual meeting. In addition, we will hold at least one youth-led church service each year showcasing the initiatives we have created. And, of course, we will always make strong efforts to thank those who get involved and celebrate our successes!





## Sample One-Year Plan

Start Date	Action Step	Completion Date	Responsible Party	Outcome
May 7	Meet with clergy to discuss the ideas of America's Promise and their outline plan	May 14	Meg Smith	Get go-ahead from Rev. Brown and set date to meet team
May 16	Meet with Leadership Team	May 16	Meg Smith	Secure support of Leadership
May 16	Recruit members for Promise Team	Ongoing	Meg Smith, Rev. Brown	Create six-person team
June 5	Initial meeting of Team, hand out assessment forms	June 5	Promise Team	Agree on initial goals. Do assessment
June 12	Rev. Brown and John Lewis to use sermon/service to outline ideas, ask for feedback. Youth team involved	June 12	Rev. Brown, John Lewis, Meg Brown to assist in preparation	Gain support of congregation and 20 names of those who are willing to help
June 20	Contact local Community of Promise leadership	Ongoing	Vincent Bell	Connect Congregation of Promise to the larger community team
July 13 - 14	Weekend led by Promise Team to meet compare assessment notes. Rev Brown invited	July 13 – 14	Promise Team, Rev. Brown, others	Outline initial plan
July 15	Write up plan to partner with local School, offer tutoring	End of July	Meg Smith, Asst. Pastor Brooks	Plan in place, suggest names of those who will tutor
August 8	Visit to school, meet with superintendent	August 8	Pastor Brooks	Secure agreement for tutoring at school one day a month
August 8	Chris Duke contacts National Mentoring Partnership for advice on training for tutoring; also creates training day	Ongoing	Chris Duke, Meg Smith	Ensure professional skills for tutors
August 27	Make initial contacts with staff, congregation members, select roster organizer (not Meg Smith)	Ongoing	Sally Fernandez	List created, dates, materials handed out
September 23	First tutoring begins	Ongoing	Superintendent, Rev Brown. Promise Team, others	Children receive their first tutor
January 1	Interim data collection	January 1	Promise Team	Initial Report
June 15	Draft final report	June 15	Promise Team	Final report
July 1	Share results with community members	Ongoing	Promise Team	Successful dissemination of information
July 15	Plan for next year's program, including increasing the number of children tutored to 40	July 15	Promise Team	Update commitment



- You may want to make the commitment longer, detailing particular tasks and activities, as well as other specific numbers and measurements you plan on making.
- Continue to look for resources. Although you are working within a faith group, this guide is to help you look beyond your congregation to your neighborhood and community. Every organization in the community has something to contribute to your overall efforts. Find out what those resources are and encourage these businesses, not-for-profit organizations, schools, public officials, foundations and state agencies to open their eyes, their hearts and their doors to youth. You will soon find that looking beyond your faith community will help to motivate other members of the congregation.
- And remember, congregations don't have to do it all by themselves.

**Bright Ideas:** A Church of Promise from the Reformed Denomination in Hudsonville, MI has paired with KIDS HOPE USA (a national America's Promise partner) to create a partnership with a local school to offer weekly tutoring to 40 children.



## Congregation of Promise Commitment Form

Building the character and competence of our nation's young people is an important challenge in our nation today. Congregations provide ways to meet this challenge. To make a difference in the lives of young people, it is important that your commitment contains each of these components:

- A new initiative or an expansion of your ongoing work with young people
- Specific and measurable goals
- A timeline to reach those goals
- An agreement to measure those goals
- A lead point of contact
- The involvement of a diverse community team

**Yes! We accept the challenge to become a Congregation of Promise** ☐

Name of Congregation \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Lead Point of Contact – Name and Phone \_\_\_\_\_

### Planning Team Roster (Minimum 3 – Maximum 6)

1. Name	2. Name
3. Name	4. Name
5. Name	6. Name

### Commitment

The goal of \_\_\_\_\_ Congregation of Promise is to reach \_\_\_\_\_ (# of young people) \_\_\_\_\_ (ages) from (our congregation's membership, from the community-at-large, or from our congregation and the community) with all Five Promises over a period of \_\_\_\_\_ (years).

We will fulfill the Five Promises for these young people through the following:



**Location of Project:**

---

**Project Name:**

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Promises	Activity	Other Partners
Caring Adult	e.g., mentoring initiative	
Safe Place	e.g., kids van (transportation to Boys and Girls Club)	Boys and Girls Club
Healthy Start		
Marketable Skills		
Opportunities to Serve		

When you have completed this form, return it to your local Community of Promise. To find your Community of Promise log on to the America's Promise Web site at [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org) or call (800) 365-0153.

PART IV

# LOOKING FORWARD





## PART IV

# LOOKING FORWARD

Once you have achieved success in your first program or activity, it is important to follow-up with specific activities that will ensure future success.

### **1. Thank your volunteers**

- Be sure to congratulate your Promise Team, your congregation and those community members who helped to create this labor of love—a Congregation of Promise. You have now laid a foundation that will provide more resources to more youth in your community.
- You have a lot to celebrate so this would be a good time to organize an event in a public setting, maybe after a service, where you can thank those who have worked so hard. It doesn't have to be a fancy, grand event. It could be as simple as an acknowledgement given at an appropriate time during service or an announcement in the congregation's bulletin. What's important is that you recognize all who contributed to this vital effort and to the congregation's progress. The public announcement will also be a way to introduce others who are not yet involved in your congregation's new initiatives, but would be interested in helping in some way.

### **2. Seek feedback from the young people you are working with.**

- There is no better way to gauge what is going on with young people than by asking them directly. You may consider surveying the young people you are working with to determine what issues are important to them. This can help you plan programs and partnerships that they will find most valuable. Or, you may consider holding focus groups with young people in your congregation and talking about some of these issues. Lastly, consider asking young people in your congregation to survey other young people. This will help secure trust between the adults and youth and instill a strong sense of responsibility and partnership in the young people who are helping conduct the survey. In addition, the results of the surveys can help you plan programs, inform parents, advocate on behalf of youth or simply bridge the conversation gap between adults and youth in the congregation.

### **3. Evaluate and reassess your commitment regularly.**

- Update your commitment goals and evaluate your past successes at least once a year.
- Make necessary adjustments to your activities based on the needs of the young people you are serving.
- If your commitment originally focused only on children within your membership, consider expanding your commitment to include young people in the community-at-large.
- Remember to review changes to your commitment with the Community of Promise.



#### 4. Expand partnerships with other congregations and community partners.

- Connecting with other congregations and community partners helps expand the impact your congregation can make on your community's young people.
- Expanding your commitment also raises the profile of your congregation, as more people in the community begin to learn about your good works.

**Bright Idea:** In Lakewood, WA, five different Congregations of Promise have joined together with the larger Community of Promise effort to provide faith-based Promise efforts to the local community. Christ Lutheran Church, First Baptist Church of Lakewood, Little Church of the Prairie, St. Francis Cabrini, and Word of Life Church of God in Christ have all worked together to develop faith initiatives which:

- **Set goals and outcomes that clearly benefit the community.**

The Summer Mission Program involves youth in various community projects such as a creek cleanup, house repair for senior citizens and painting a community center. The summer activities are augmented in the winter by a fund-raising drive to benefit the project.

- **Involve other community partners.**

The faith initiative includes various tutoring activities at local schools.

- **Are closely connected with the efforts of other youth serving organizations, including Lakewood's Promise.**

Partners include Communities in Schools of Lakewood and the City of Lakewood's city council staff.

**Bright Ideas:** In Waterville, ME, four Churches of Promise—St Mark's Episcopal Church, Holy Spirit Parish, First Congregational and Pleasant Street United Methodist Church—have created a mentoring program specifically for Waterville's Promise that features a series of games designed to enhance youth-adult interaction.



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

America's Promise has many resources available to your congregation as you implement your plans. Below are some of the resources available to you:

- **The America's Promise National Faith Team** is available to answer any of your questions and concerns. In addition, we can help you get connected to our network and send you the materials you need to get started. America's Promise is continually compiling the best techniques for launching successful faith communities. To request these best practices, please contact [faith@americaspromise.org](mailto:faith@americaspromise.org).
- **The Faith Fact Sheet** details America's Promise local and national faith partnerships. To request this resource, please contact [faith@americaspromise.org](mailto:faith@americaspromise.org).
- **101 Ideas Guide** provides examples of faith groups around the nation who are implementing the Five Promises. It is broken down by the Five Promises so you can use it as an idea-starter. Find it at [www.americaspromise.org/GetInvolved/NationalCommitments/faith/main.cfm](http://www.americaspromise.org/GetInvolved/NationalCommitments/faith/main.cfm)
- **The Community of Promise Network** is the heart of the America's Promise. Begin your search for a Community of Promise in your area by looking at the Community of Promise page on the America's Promise Web site at [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org). Log on to discover what more than 250 active Communities of Promise are doing in the faith arena.
- **Promise Stations** are an on-line gathering place where people share information, ideas, events and other resources supporting children and youth. Created with support from the Ford Motor Company Fund, a Promise Station provides volunteer opportunities and empowers individuals to share their unique skills and interests with young people. For more information go to <http://www.americaspromise.org/PromiseStations/index.cfm>
- **The Five Promises Checklist** is a community tool that helps caring adults bring the Five Promises to life for the children and youth they know by name. The Checklist is a comprehensive but easy-to-use guide that provides specific recommendations on how you can help improve the lives of the young people you care about as well as local resources to help you do so. In only a few simple steps you will learn how and where to go for those resources, eliminating any guesswork. Many Communities of Promise have already developed a Checklist that your congregation can use to connect to the community's best services and resources. If a Checklist has not already been created for your community, your congregation can take the lead in creating one. For more information about the Checklist contact [checklist@americaspromise.org](mailto:checklist@americaspromise.org).
- **The Power of Five** is a new tool that encourages young people to lend a hand to kids in their community by fulfilling Five Promises. This service-learning program was created by America's Promise and Weekly Reader for group leaders working with young people ages 11 to 14. Based on the founding principles of America's Promise, the Power of Five asks kids in this age group to do their part in making sure that every young person has what he or she needs to grow up happy and





healthy and become a successful adult and citizen. The activities help facilitate the group's efforts as the young people evaluate and research their service options and then commit at least five days to fulfilling the Five Promises to kids their age or younger. This tool is perfect for Sunday School teachers, youth ministers and other adults working with young teens. For more information on the Power of Five log on to [www.americaspromise.org/youngleaders](http://www.americaspromise.org/youngleaders) or call (800) 365-0153.



Bruce Davidson

Caroline County, Virginia



## MESSAGE FROM THE AMERICA'S PROMISE FAITH TEAM

We hope that this *Faith in the Five* guide has given you the same sense of excitement we feel about making a difference in the lives of our nation's children. We also hope it can serve as a blueprint for the growth and development of youth outreach in your congregation. While this booklet cannot document all the possible challenges and issues you may encounter on the journey to becoming a Congregation of Promise, we hope ideas contained in this guide will give you direction as well as a sense of the potential for growth that this strategy offers.

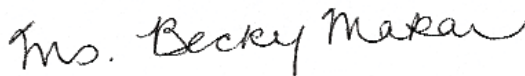
Remember you are not alone. America's Promise regularly holds technical assistance and faith development conference calls to help you move your ideas forward and share them with others. There are so many opportunities to get involved with the America's Promise network. Log on to [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org) to discover how you can start making a difference today.

Remember that this is just the beginning. The heart of the America's Promise movement is about changing the lives of our nation's youth for the better. And you have a big part to play. Thank you—and good luck!

### **The America's Promise Faith Team 2002**



Rev. Mark Farr



Ms. Becky Makar

A SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO TARYN ROMAN FOR HER HELP IN THE CREATION OF THIS GUIDE

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# FEEDBACK

As we mentioned in the beginning of this document, the purpose of *Faith in the Five* is to aid congregations—of *all* faiths—in mobilizing their community to address the needs of their children and youth. It is our hope that this document will be circulated widely and spark discussions on how congregations and communities can work together to enrich the lives of the children in their community.

At America's Promise, we have worked hard to make this document as valuable and as easy to use as possible. But we are always looking for ways to improve our work and hope to produce additional volumes of *Faith in the Five*. To that end, we welcome your feedback about the content and presentation of these pages. Good, bad, and indifferent your comments are always helpful. Please fill in you comments in the space provided and fax to America's Promise at 703.535.3903. If you have any additional questions or comments, please contact Reverend Mark Farr, Director of Faith Initiatives, at America's Promise, 909 North Washington Street, Suite 400, Alexandria, VA 22314 or via email at [faith@americaspromise.org](mailto:faith@americaspromise.org).

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